

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am from Westport and a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence. I'm a Staples High School graduate currently studying at Columbia.

My high school had a gun scare during my junior year. In the middle of my Latin class, around 1 p.m., the vice principal's voice came on the PA, telling us that we weren't in immediate danger but that we needed to shelter in place. It was a small class—seven typically nonchalant seniors, the teacher, and me—and the usually lighthearted mood turned fearful as we realized that whatever was happening was something very serious.

Fortunately, nobody was physically hurt. We learned in the coming few days what had happened: a boy in my grade had appeared to threaten violence against a teacher, and it had been believed that he might have brought a firearm to school. Absent the risk of a gun, it would have been a minor event, a matter of gossip rather than trauma.

Connecticut was the first state in the nation to pass an Extreme Risk Protection Order law, in 1999. It offers a means of last resort, with due process protections, to temporarily remove firearms from individuals judged to be at risk of imminent harm to themselves or others. It has been shown to prevent firearm suicide and stop mass shootings. It is time to strengthen the law so that it works harder to prevent gun violence. In particular, when the protection order expires, it should be a requirement that the subject is no longer at risk of violence before the firearms are returned. That is not the case now.

ERPOs are effective because even though individuals may legally possess guns, they can be dangerous to themselves or others. Background checks are a point-in-time measure that can't detect dangers that family members, friends and co-workers can sense. Individuals considering suicide often give some sign of their intentions. An FBI study of the pre-attack behaviors of active shooters found on average they displayed four to five observable and

concerning behaviors that suggested the possibility of violent intentions.

Claims by opponents that ERPO laws violate due process have no merit. According to the Giffords Law Center, no court has invalidated an extreme risk protection order or risk-warrant law. Courts in Connecticut, Indiana, and Florida that have heard challenges to ERPO laws have held they do not violate the due process and/or are constitutional under the Second Amendment. There is no evidence that the process is used to harass gun owners. Judges are required to have clear and convincing evidence to issue final risk protection orders.

I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works harder to prevent firearm suicide and homicide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Carter Teplica

Westport, CT

Staples High School '19